

# Homegrown FLAVOR



FROM INDEPENDENT TO INTERNATIONAL AND OKRA TO OYSTERS, THE 20TH ANNUAL FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL SALUTES THE SUNSHINE STATE WITH FINE FILMS AND FRESH FARE.

BY KRISTEN MANIERI

It's been nearly two decades since the Florida Film Festival (FFF) was established to celebrate exceptional independent filmmaking. To gain perspective, consider this: In its inaugural year, 62 films were shown. In 2010, more than 1,500 submissions were received and 165 of them made it to the screen. This year promises an even bigger event.

Fans and visiting celebrities know that this isn't your average film festival. As FFF has grown, organizers have carved out a niche by adding a world-class culinary component, while unapologetically upholding an über-casual ambiance. The festival straddles a fine line between being a prestigious cinematic event and a friendly gathering of film enthusiasts, but year after year it proves itself to be as unpretentious as they come.

One of FFF's biggest supporters is Full Sail University, which returns as the primary sponsor for 2011. "Full Sail is honored to be a part of the continuously growing 10-day celebration that allows our students—as well as film fans from around the world—to experience diverse genres of film, celebrity guests, industry forums, networking opportunities and an extensive list of special events," says Rick Ramsey, director of Visual Arts at Full Sail. "As innovative educators in film, Full Sail University has taken great pride in joining the Florida Film Festival in their continued efforts to share the impact and importance of filmmaking with the community."

Produced by Enzian and hosted at locations throughout Central Florida, FFF



THE 1994 FILM *RIVER OF GRASS* will be screened as part of a selection of Florida films chosen by curator Scott Foundas. Directed by native Floridian Kelly Reichardt, the movie ties into this year's festival theme, "Fresh-Squeezed Indies."

runs April 8-17. This year's theme, Fresh Squeezed Indies, gives a shout-out to independent filmmaking, but also to the festival's heritage. This year's event promises "all things Florida" and has the films and the food to back it up.

A special selection of retro Florida movies chosen by Curator Scott Foundas will feature a handful of feature-length films and possibly a short. A former Tampa resident, Foundas can trace his passion for filmmaking back to the Sunshine State, where he reviewed films for his high school's public-access cable show and contributed to *The St. Petersburg Times*' "Teens on Screen" column.

Today, Foundas is associate program director for the Film Society of Lincoln Center and was recently named Critic of the Year by the Los Angeles Press Club. He plans to showcase films that were produced and set in Florida and that he feels "get underneath the skin of a place," he explains. "The films that I'll highlight are the ones that seem to have an insider's knowledge of Florida. These are stories that could not take place anywhere else in quite the same way."

One such movie is *River of Grass*, a 1994 production set in the Everglades that was directed by Florida native Kelly Reichardt. FFF has always showcased

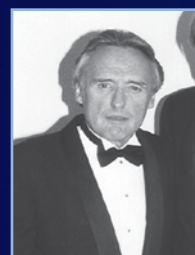
1992

The first FFF is held in June, featuring 62 films and special guests Oliver Stone and Paul Newman.



1993

Patrons flock to "An Evening with Brian Dennehy," featuring 1987's *The Belly of an Architect*.



1994

Program highlights include "An Evening with Dennis Hopper," featuring *Chasers*.

1995

Events include "An Evening with Karen Black," showcasing 1975's *The Day of the Locust*; actress Janet Leigh also attends.



1996

Diane Ladd receives the Enzian Award for Artistic Achievement; "An Afternoon with Diane Ladd" features *Mrs. Munck*.



1997

FFF hosts "An evening with William H. Macy," screening his 1991 film, *Homicide*; Full Sail University becomes a sponsor.



1998

Events include "An Afternoon with Steve Buscemi and Seymour Cassel," featuring *In the Soup*.



1999

*The Blair Witch Project* is screened at FFF's opening night.



2000

FFF named one of the top ten film festivals in the world by *The Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide*.



2001

FFF's special 10th anniversary program includes "An Evening with Jason Lee," featuring *Chasing Amy*.

2002

FFF becomes one of only 34 film festivals in the U.S. recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences as a qualifier in the category of Live Action Short Films for the Academy Awards.



2003

FFF moves from June to March. Enzian is chosen as one of only 25 theaters in the U.S. to receive a free digital projector for screening independent films.





**A COINCIDENCE OF SORTS**, by UCF student Edgar Jorge, will be featured in "Best of Brouhaha," a showcase of Florida's top student and independent films.

## FLORIDA'S FRESHEST FILMS

**B**rouhaha, the baby brother of FFF, celebrated its 19th anniversary last December with the screening of 49 films and videos from Florida film students, monthly *FilmSlam* winners and a few independent submissions chosen by a selection committee. As the two-day showcase drew to a close, a jury of industry professionals chose the 11 films that will make up "Best of Brouhaha" at FFF.

Conceived by Gregg Hale, producer of *The Blair Witch Project*, Brouhaha was designed to be a fun and accessible showcase exclusively for Florida-based filmmakers and students. The series not only gives student filmmakers the opportunity to screen their work to an audience of more than 300, but also to

have their works critiqued by a jury of industry professionals.

"I think the opportunity to have films shown outside of the classroom and campus is meaningful to all film students," says Edgar Jorge, a UCF student whose film, *A Coincidence of Sorts*, is included in Best of Brouhaha. "Screening our work in a different environment helps us gain confidence by having different audiences respond to it. It's also interesting to see the films done at other universities and see how your work and school compare."

For many, Brouhaha serves as a springboard to something bigger. Just ask Steven Shea, whose film *2:22* was included in the 2010 Cannes Film Festival's Short Film Corner.

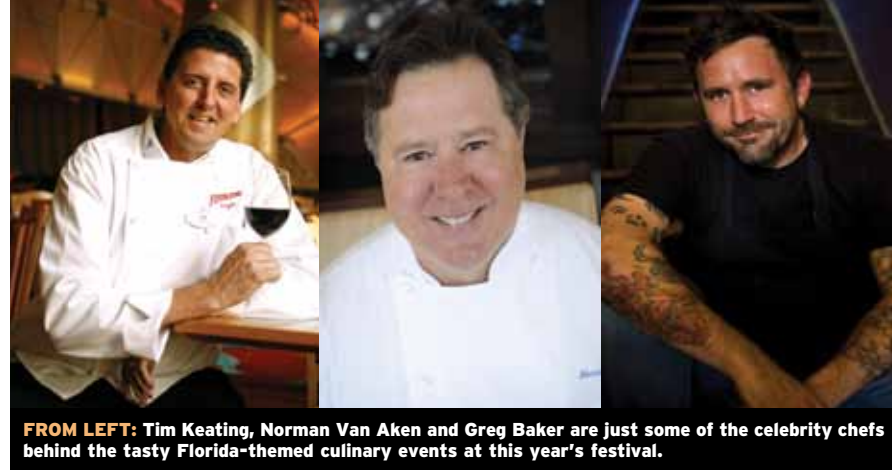
emerging talent and indie films, and Foundas echos that tradition with this pick. "There is a real commitment to discovering new voices and highlighting independent work," he says. "That's why I wanted to show *River of Grass* so badly. It made one of its first appearances at the Florida Film Festival and Reichardt went on to create big movies."

Foundas says he'll definitely include a film by Victor Nuñez, whom he describes as "the epitome of the Florida filmmaker." Famous for movies such as *Ulee's Gold*, the director was born in DeLand. "Nuñez has spent his career connecting with the people and landscape of Florida," Foundas says.

*The Yearling*, another classic Florida-themed film that's based on the novel by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, will be shown on April 12 at 7 p.m. at Central Park in Winter Park. The free screening is part of the Popcorn Flicks in the Park program.

In addition to being a cinematic smorgasbord that includes international, documentary and short films, the FFF will once again include a substantial culinary component, which has been expanded for 2011. "We hope that attendees feel the synergy between food and film throughout their time at the festival," says Marketing and Public Relations Manager Jordana Meade. Plans are even in the works for specialty flavored popcorn and themed cocktails during discussions.

The 10-day celebration kicks off Friday, April 8, with a 6:30 p.m. film screening at Regal Winter Park Village 20, followed by an after-party at Enzian at 8 p.m. This



**FROM LEFT:** Tim Keating, Norman Van Aken and Greg Baker are just some of the celebrity chefs behind the tasty Florida-themed culinary events at this year's festival.

homage to Florida's gastronomical greatness will feature food and drink with Sunshine State nuances created by Enzian, 4 Rivers Smokehouse, The Ravenous Pig, Luma on Park, K Restaurant Wine Bar and Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress.

From noon to 2 p.m. the following day, a special lunch salutes Florida's most famous fare: swamp cabbage, sweet tea and key lime pie. Gary Mormino, a historian, food scholar and gourmet, will lead an enlightening discussion about the state's culinary legends.

The foodie festivities continue that evening at *NORMAN'S*, where award-winning Chef Norman Van Aken will present *Floridian Feasting: A Native Tribute*. Beginning at 6:30 p.m., guests will geographically and gastronomically travel the Sunshine State, sampling dishes such as smoked mojo pork belly, Daytona blue crab, and Vero Beach red watercress. Three supporting chefs—Tim Keating of Flying Fish Café, Greg Baker from The Refinery and *NORMAN'S* Misty Shores—were hand-picked by Van

Aken to assist with this spectacular spread.

On Sunday, April 10, at 11 a.m., FFF swings from haute to humble for the Fish Camp Brunch at Oviedo's Black Hammock Restaurant. Patrons will dine alongside Hammy, a 680-pound pet alligator, while noshing home-cooked okra, steamed crawfish and sweet fritters in front of scenic Lake Jesup.

An all-American buffet of breakfast favorites awaits attendees of the Awards Brunch on Saturday, April 16, at Enzian, where festival winners will be announced. That evening, the festivities move to Eden Bar for Revel 20, a no-ticket-required birthday bash that starts at 7 p.m. FFF winds up Sunday, April 17 at 11 a.m., when Enzian Chef Charles Hamilton serves up "Catfish Tales: Charles's Florida Brunch."

Whether you're a casual movie buff or a die-hard film fan, a greenhorn gourmet or a culinary connoisseur, the homegrown flavor of FFF is sure to satisfy. **oam**

*Freelancer Kristen Manieri writes lifestyle and travel stories about Orlando and other locales.*

## FAMILY TIES

**L**iz Tiedtke was only 6 when her parents, Philip and Sigrid Tiedtke, founded FFF. That year, Liz was a doorman. Since then, she's distributed ballots, coordinated events, manned the box office and worked with celebs. This year, little Lizzie is director of operations; but she goes by Elizabeth now.

Tiedtke has never missed a festival, even when she was attending school in New York. "It would be like missing Christmas," she says.

For a girl who grew up ensconced in the world of star-studded film screenings and legendary after-parties, it would probably be worse. Not many people can boast that they've hung out with Steve Buscemi or sat in on FFF's selection committee meeting, which was held in



Lizzie and her late grandfather, John Tiedtke

her living room. To Tiedtke, home and FFF have always been one and the same. And the feeling is contagious.

"The festival has always felt to people like we we're welcoming them into our home because we literally invited people into our home," she says, referring to the days when the gala after-party was held at the Tiedtke's.

The festival has grown too large to continue that tradition, but it's likely this sense of community that inspired John Voight to close down Eden Bar in 2009, hanging with locals well into the night, and that made Emma Stone stay for hours after the 2010 opening night party, enjoying a spirited conversation in sign language with Enzian's dishwasher.

"You get the feeling that things happen at this festival that don't happen at other festivals," Tiedtke muses. "It's like seeing a friend after a long time ... every year the festival came back, it brought so many great old memories and continued to create new ones."

<p><b>2004</b></p> <p>The Regal Winter Park Village 20 becomes an FFF venue, resulting in the festival's highest grossing attendance to date.</p> 	<p><b>2005</b></p> <p>Enzian celebrates its 20th anniversary; FFF screens a record-breaking 139 films from 26 countries.</p> 	<p><b>2006</b></p> <p>John Waters shares his perspectives on a life in cinema, his work and "bad taste" at an FFF special event.</p> 	<p><b>2007</b></p> <p>Inaugural Film, Food &amp; Wine Weekend kicks off FFF with celebrity chef appearances and unique dining events.</p> 	<p><b>2008</b></p> <p>Chef Anthony Bourdain is on hand for FFF's opening night gala; actress Mary Stuart Masterson attends; Eden Bar opens, featuring murals by Academy Award-nominated animator Bill Plympton.</p> 	<p><b>2009</b></p> <p>FFF guest celebrities include Academy Award-nominated actress Glenn Close and Academy Award-winning actor Jon Voight.</p> 	<p><b>2010</b></p> <p>Celebs include Oscar-nominated actors Seymour Cassel and Gena Rowlands, who attend screening of <i>Faces</i>.</p> 	<p><b>2011</b></p> <p>FFF celebrates its 20th anniversary by paying homage to indie films.</p> 
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